

provide the transparency to applicants so they know where they're at, and address the adverse decisions by a chief of missions so people have a chance to correct the record.

Make no mistake—this is urgent.

Just yesterday, on the front page of *The New York Times*, there was the story about an Afghan interpreter named Sulaiman, who has been working with us in Afghanistan for over a decade in over 300 missions in highly dangerous Special Operations assignment. Over the course of the last few years, the Taliban has attempted to kill Sulaiman three times; but despite his exemplary service and the extreme threat to his life, that visa we created is not functioning for him. After 2 years, he remains in limbo, with no visa and the program set to expire. Only 22 percent of the Iraqi visas and 12 percent of the Afghan visas have been issued. These are ready to go.

Last fall, *The Post* reported that over 5,000 documentarily-complete Afghan applications remained in a backlog. No doubt, the past performance is abysmal, but we have an obligation to extend and reform the programs and to make sure we give the resources necessary to deal with the understandable paperwork involved.

This bipartisan issue offers Members of Congress and the administration the chance to work together to save lives and ensure the safety of our troops currently serving in harm's way and future missions abroad. Otherwise, no one in their right mind is ever going to cooperate with U.S. forces under these circumstances.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S FY14 BUDGET PROPOSAL ON NUCLEAR WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Department of Energy's budget proposal on nuclear waste. It's a joke—but as a representative of nuclear electricity consumers and taxpayers, I don't find it funny.

DOE Assistant Secretary Peter Lyons says we should "cut our losses and move on" from Yucca Mountain. We've spent \$15 billion on Yucca Mountain, but this administration says we should just give up and go try somewhere else, hoping some other State will be a willing host. The DOE budget proposes spending \$5.6 billion over the next 10 years to start over and maybe, just maybe, have a permanent repository by 2048.

The details provided for this new plan are scant to say the least—14 pages. DOE proposes to abandon \$15 billion and 30 years of work, start over, create a new government entity to be responsible, and find willing States to host two interim storage facilities and a repository—all within 14 pages. I consider it brainstorming, not a plan. It's certainly not something that justifies

\$5.6 billion. In addition, DOE has repeatedly stated the need for Congress to pass legislation, but has yet to propose any. That shows the administration is not trying to solve this problem, just avoid it by pointing the finger at Congress.

Nuclear electricity consumers pay for a permanent repository for spent nuclear fuel. What would they get after spending another 10 years and \$5.6 billion? A pilot interim storage facility with limited capacity.

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A pilot facility? Dry cask storage, the same technology that will be used at the interim storage facility, is currently used at 65 locations. As for transportation, the U.S. nuclear industry has completed 3,000 shipments of used nuclear fuel over 1.7 million miles of roads and railroads. What's the purpose of having a pilot facility?

The only other pilot facility is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. I've been there, and it's an impressive facility. But that pilot project became a permanent facility with a 10,000-year environmental standard. Given that backdrop, does DOE really think some unsuspecting State will actually fall for the idea that a pilot interim storage facility will truly be temporary?

But \$5.6 billion doesn't begin to address the real costs hidden in this proposal. Instead of merely paying for a repository, nuclear electricity consumers will now have to write off the cost of abandoning the Yucca Mountain site where we've spent \$15 billion. DOE's previous estimates for transportation were \$19 billion; so if DOE is now going to have to transport it twice, once to an interim storage and then later to a repository, ratepayers will be on the hook for an extra \$19 billion. All this, plus the \$5.6 billion in the budget, equals \$39.6 billion.

And that's just the bill for nuclear electricity consumers. Taxpayers will continue to pay for the liability costs of DOE's failure to provide disposal. That cost is \$2.6 billion so far and projected to be \$20 billion by 2020. The Government Accountability Office tells us that it's faster to finish Yucca Mountain than to start over with interim storage. Yet this administration prefers to start over, disregarding the cost to the taxpayer.

Electricity consumers and taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for President Obama's campaign promise to HARRY REID, certainly not \$39.6 billion worth. Mr. Speaker, DOE's proposal is a boondoggle at a time when our citizens can least afford it. I, for one, am not laughing.

Mr. Speaker, as we remember the tragic events of yesterday, we are reminded that there is sin and evil in the world. We pray for Boston, our country, and the world, but the business of the Republic must go on.

PROTECTING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to reflect again on yesterday's tragic and obviously painful events. I think it's important for our colleagues, and certainly for those we represent across America, to recognize that our attention on those issues are equal to the pain and the devastation that they represent. It is important to again offer sympathy to those who lost their loved ones, to those who still are under the care of the medical team in Boston, to the city of Boston, the State of Massachusetts, the mayor and Governor, my colleagues from the State of Massachusetts, and certainly the people there. You have our prayers and, again, our commitment to never cease until the perpetrator or perpetrators are brought to justice.

In saying that, I believe it is important that we proceed in a discussion that will also move this country forward, and that is to finally get to a point of passing a budget that eliminates, takes away, never to be seen again, this horrific sequester that the American people do not deserve.

Let me congratulate the President on having a humane budget, a budget that considers the needs of Americans. It is outstanding that he has offered a universal pre-K, having seen the tears of grown men when the sequester came through and their child was eliminated from Head Start, grown men, parents crying at the Head Start center. And everywhere I go in my district, people who are in charge of Head Start literally in pain about those that they have to eliminate from those positions because those families don't have the resources for private child care.

So I congratulate the President on his astuteness in recognizing the importance of that and recognizing to not stray away from the necessities of job creation and putting in place major transportation jobs and infrastructure jobs: passenger rail, which I am so passionate about; surface transportation; and a most important one, rebuilding your neighborhoods and communities and cities where jobs are in short demand and where the infrastructure and the city is crumbling.

I want to congratulate the President for his saving of Medicaid and ensuring that seniors who are in nursing homes will be protected. But, more importantly, that those without health insurance will have the ability under the Affordable Care Act to ensure that they will have that.

But I serve as well on the Homeland Security Committee, and I think it is important to say and be honest that the sequester is devastating to America's homeland security. It is good to have a budget that respects those needs, but it is important to tell the truth. We are desperate when it comes to recognizing the needs of our Border Patrol agents and the numbers, even at